

Dissertation Examples: Master's

About this document

This PDF lists 12 **master's dissertation examples** and thesis examples (2019–2026), each a complete, openly licensed document you can read in full, with a note on what it does well and who it is useful for. Use them to see how a finished dissertation is structured and argued at your level before you write your own.

By [Derek Jansen](#) (MBA) · Reviewed by [Eunice Rautenbach](#) (DTech) · Grad Coach · October 2026

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Computer science

1. Rethinking Software Supply Chains in the Age of Generative Systems: A Case Study of Use-Case-Oriented Regeneration

Tanmay Singla · Master of Science in ECE · Purdue University · 2026 · 89 pages

APPROACH Case study

WHY WE PICKED IT

Eighty-nine pages, and included partly to make a point about scope. It is a case study rather than a benchmark sweep, it carries a glossary before the abstract, and it uses the same Purdue skeleton of a context and problem statement followed by a section headed Thesis Statement.

Read it if your topic is moving faster than your write-up: the subject is what generative systems do to software supply chains, which is about as current as a thesis can be, and it shows that a defensible Master's contribution on a fast-moving topic is a well-bounded case study rather than an attempt at coverage. The glossary is a small thing worth copying whenever your field's vocabulary is younger than your examiners.

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2. Evaluating Traffic Reshaping Attacks Against Machine-Learning-Based Network Intrusion Detection Systems

Luke Bushur · Master of Science · Purdue University Fort Wayne · 2026 · 124 pages

APPROACH Machine learning, Security evaluation

WHY WE PICKED IT

The most copyable Master's-level engineering structure here. Chapter 1 is short and has only three sections: background and motivation, research questions and contributions, thesis organization.

Chapter 2's literature review is then organized as exactly the four things the study needs to stand up, one section each: the datasets, the systems being attacked, the attacks, and the existing defenses. Nothing is reviewed that the study does not later use, which is the discipline most literature reviews lack. Chapter 3 is called System Design and is broken into modules, each with numbered sub-steps for packet parsing, metadata extraction, vector construction and feature generation. If you are building something and cannot work out where the "methodology" goes, this is the answer: the design of the artifact is the methodology, written so somebody else could rebuild it.

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3. Encoding IP Address as a Feature for Network Intrusion Detection

Enchun Shao · Master of Science · Purdue University · 2019 · 64 pages

APPROACH Machine learning, Feature engineering

WHY WE PICKED IT

Sixty-four pages, and the most useful chapter 1 in the collection for anybody who has been told their introduction is vague. It has separate numbered sections for the statement of the problem, the scope, the

research question, the significance, the assumptions, the limitations and the delimitations.

If you have ever tried to work out what the difference is between a limitation and a delimitation, here is a short thesis that does both in a page, in context: a limitation is a constraint you did not choose, a delimitation is a boundary you did. Chapter 3 is the other reason to read it. It is a data pipeline written down step by step, from loading and merging the source databases through converting labels to numbers, handling class imbalance, and then three treatments of the same variable, an IP address: as a binary number, as four split numbers, and as one-hot encodings at three different bit widths. Somebody else could rerun this from the text alone, which is the actual standard for a methodology chapter and one that long theses often meet less well than short ones.

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Education

4. Exploring Motivation for Learning Japanese as a Foreign Language

Akari Osumi · Master of Arts · Purdue University · 2019 · 96 pages

APPROACH Survey

WHY WE PICKED IT

This is what a Master's thesis is actually meant to look like: 96 pages, one campus, 100 students, a survey run over the closing weeks of a single semester. If you are currently designing something that needs three countries and two years, read it as a corrective. The structure is the main lesson.

Five research questions are numbered in chapter 1, and chapter 4 answers them in order under headings that repeat them, so nobody has to hunt for where a question got dealt with. Two smaller things repay a look. Table 2 gives the Cronbach alpha for every scale and names the three items she deleted and why, which is how you write about a measure you had to repair. And the limitations section on page 80 is analysis rather than apology: 100 responses from 400 invitations, a survey she thinks was too long (23 people quit partway), and the self-selection problem named outright, that students who volunteered for a survey about motivation were probably the motivated ones.

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5. Teacher Standards and Professionalism

Pauline Deborah Barnes · Master of Education · Victoria University of Wellington · 2019 · 108 pages

APPROACH Case study, Focus groups, Document analysis

WHY WE PICKED IT

Read this if you are researching your own workplace or your own sector, which describes a lot of part-time Master's students. Barnes asked what professionalism looks like in practice for New Zealand teachers, and whether the new teaching standards strengthen it, while working at the body that wrote those standards. She says so on page 31, and then lists four specific things she did about it: declaring her role in the recruitment materials, stating plainly that the project was not her employer's work, guaranteeing anonymity, and excluding any teacher she already knew through work.

That is how a conflict of interest gets handled, and it takes her one sentence. The other reason to open it is Table 2 on page 25, a recruitment funnel almost nobody publishes: 127 schools and early-childhood networks invited, 66 teachers interested, 41 who then could not do it, 16 who could not make the times, 5 who pulled out after agreeing, 45 in the room. She had planned 15 to 20 teachers per sector and finished primary school with two focus groups after repeated reminders brought no further interest, and she explains that rather than quietly reporting the final number. Chapter 5 is worth copying too: each of its main headings is one of her three research questions, phrased as a question, so the discussion visibly answers them.

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Environmental science

6. Reframing Ecological Identity: Ecological Management Practices and Social-Ecological Systems Resilience in the Mid-Hills of Nepal

Jessie Hughes · M.S., Natural Resources · Cornell University · 2024 · 191 pages

APPROACH Survey instrument, Qualitative

WHY WE PICKED IT

The Master's-length environmental entry, and the one to read when **your instrument does not work and you have to say so**. Hughes administered an established Environmental Identity scale to smallholder farmers and herders in the mid-hills of Nepal. They scored below the global average, and simultaneously demonstrated, through the rest of her analyses, that they see themselves as an integrated part of their social-ecological system.

Rather than reporting the low scores and moving on, she concludes that the scale is not fit for purpose with resource-proximate communities and argues why. A negative finding about your own measure is the hardest thing to write up honestly, and it is often the most useful thing in the document. Also a good model of building instruments collaboratively with participants.

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Finance & accounting

7. The Economic Returns of Decarbonizing the Global Power Sector

Yuktha Bhadane · M.S., Applied Economics and Management · Cornell University · 2025 · 122 pages

APPROACH Scenario analysis

WHY WE PICKED IT

The Master's example, and the one to read if the doctoral theses are making you despair. Five chapters, 122 pages, one clearly bounded question: what does decarbonizing the global power sector cost, and what does it return?

Its most copyable feature is the smallest. At the end of chapter 1 there is a **roadmap paragraph** saying what each remaining chapter does: chapter 2 reviews the scientific consensus and the existing finance literature, chapter 3 details data sources and the methodological framework, chapter 4 presents results across financing scenarios, chapter 5 discusses implementation barriers and the role of climate clubs. Four

sentences, and a reader knows the shape of the whole document before reading any of it. Examiners read a lot of theses; a roadmap buys goodwill in the first few pages, and almost every supervisor asks for one without showing an example.

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Marketing & advertising

8. A Pathway to Financial Stability in Retirement? Annuities and Consumers Preferences

Michael Alexander · M.S., Applied Economics and Management · Cornell University · 2024 · 147 pages

APPROACH Survey, Conjoint analysis

WHY WE PICKED IT

The model for **reporting a sample honestly**, which sounds dull and is what examiners probe hardest. Chapter 3 (from page 23) records: the survey ran on Amazon Mechanical Turk through a named university lab; participants were quota-limited to a 50/50 gender split and ages 45 to 65 and otherwise randomized; it took 12-15 minutes and paid \$5; a pilot of 20 ran in April 2023 and was excluded from the final sample; full collection ran June to early August 2023; 511 responses were collected and 492 analyzed, the difference being omitted questions, time outliers and disingenuous ratings.

Every number a reader needs to judge the sample, including the ones that make it look smaller. Most dissertations report the final N and leave the examiner to ask what happened to the rest. It is also a usable model for ratings-based conjoint analysis, with the choice of method justified.

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9. Phygital Design: Boosting Luxury Purchase Intention by Enhancing Consumer Perceptions of In-Store Usefulness and Playfulness

Natalie Rose Verdiguél · M.S., Human-Environment Relations · Cornell University · 2024 · 60 pages

APPROACH Experiment, Mediation analysis

WHY WE PICKED IT

The cleanest **hypothesis development** section in the collection, and the shortest document to demonstrate it. Section 1.2 (page 9) is subdivided one hypothesis at a time: phygital design and purchase intention, perceived usefulness and playfulness, the mediating role of both, then the moderator.

Each subsection argues from prior theory and ends "Therefore, we hypothesize:" followed by the hypothesis. That is the structure every methods textbook describes and few students see executed: the hypotheses are not a list at the end of the literature review, each one is the conclusion of its own short argument, and a reader can see exactly which literature supports which prediction. It sits on a named theoretical base (the Technology Acceptance Model, plus hedonic and utilitarian shopping motivations) and tests mediation and moderation rather than main effects alone.

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10. Similar or Complementary: Brand Personality and Brand Alliance Success

Sherry Cai · M.S., Hotel Administration · Cornell University · 2022 · 60 pages

APPROACH Experiment

WHY WE PICKED IT

Sixty pages, and the best experimental-design example here. Go to **section 4.2, "Method" (page 30)**. Cai needs hotel brands that differ on personality and nothing else.

Real brands carry baggage, so she invents two: both called "Hotel Genova", both priced at \$150 a night, differing only in decor and service style, each presented with a description and two photographs. That is controlling a confound by construction rather than by covariate. Then she pretests and reports the checks: the sincere hotel was rated more sincere than exciting (5.67 vs 4.55, $p < .001$), the exciting one more exciting (6.07 vs 4.73, $p < .001$), and the two were equally liked overall (5.67 vs 5.82, $p = .574$), so any later difference cannot be explained by one simply being nicer. A 2x2 between-subjects design follows. Manipulation checks are what student experiments most often skip.

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Psychology

11. Effect of Food Nostalgia on Memory Accuracy and Memory Confidence

Sihan Zhou · M.A., Human Development · Cornell University · 2024 · 53 pages

APPROACH Experiment, Memory task

WHY WE PICKED IT

The Master's-length psychology example, and the one to read for **a procedure written so someone could actually repeat it**. Zhou reports the session length (1.5 hours), the two interleaved tasks, the exact stimulus set (102 American and 115 Indian food images, plus a matched "foil" image per item built to the original stimulus paper's method), the twelve seconds allowed per rating, the presentation in eleven blocks of twenty with fifteen-second breaks, the ninety-second cap on writing a memory, and the five follow-up questions each memory triggered.

She also reports attrition plainly: 66 recruited, 46 analyzed after filtering invalid responses, with the exclusion criteria stated first. Replicability is a word students are told to care about; this is what it looks like as prose.

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Sociology

12. Re-examining pathways to smallholder food security and the transformative potential of agroecology: A case study from Malawi

Sidney Madsen · M.S., Development Sociology · Cornell University · 2019 · 139 pages

APPROACH Case study, Interviews, Participatory

WHY WE PICKED IT

The Master's-length sociology example, and a model of **writing up fieldwork you did not design alone**. Madsen's study sits inside a three-year, pre-post delayed-intervention project run with a Malawian NGO, and chapter 2 says exactly where her work stops and the project's begins: 537 farmers across ten village areas, eight receiving the intervention immediately and two held back to 2019, with half the intervention villages trained through farmer discussion groups and half through participatory theater.

She then names her own slice, the second round of interviews in June and July 2018, and the team who collected it, down to one undergraduate, two graduate students, five farmer promoters and one project field officer. If you are joining an existing project, inheriting a dataset, or working inside someone else's trial, this is how you describe the design honestly without claiming it.

Read the full dissertation · Original record

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How to use an example dissertation

An example is a map of how one study was put together, not a template to copy. These four steps get the most out of one.

- 1. Read the abstract and the contents first.** They show the shape of the whole document before you spend an hour in it.
Recommended reading: [Dissertation and thesis structure](#)
- 2. Read the chapter you are writing next.** Look at how it opens, how it is organized under headings, and how it ends.
Recommended reading: [How to write the methodology chapter](#)
- 3. Check the level and the field.** A doctoral thesis goes further than a master's dissertation, and fields differ in what they expect.
Recommended reading: [What is a dissertation?](#)
- 4. Follow your own handbook over any example.** Where an example and your program disagree, your program wins.
Recommended reading: [Every example in the collection](#)

Used this way, two or three good examples teach you more than any amount of general advice.

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